

Conservation Tools Education Program

The Conservation Tools Education Program brings together public and private organizations working to conserve natural lands in the Puget Sound region. These partners identify undeveloped, habitat rich areas that provide multiple public benefits such as pollution and flood control, farm and forest resources, wildlife habitat, and aesthetic value. Program partners then educate private landowners about the variety of conservation tools available for land protection, focusing on non-regulatory,



incentive-based programs. They provide guidance to help landowners understand the application requirements, consequences, and incentives associated with each option. Property owners are educated by means of brochures, workshops, and one-on-one site visits. WSU Extension volunteers also learn about conservation tools, support WSU staff, and provide direct guidance to property owners during workshops and site visits. Program activities have occurred in six Puget Sound counties.

Program Goal:

- Educate landowners about the value of natural resource lands and the tools they can use to conserve forests, farms, open space, and wildlife habitat.



Conserved Open Space on Bean Farm, King County

Photo P. Racette

2002-2003 Achievements

4,600 landowners mailed information on conservation tool programs and contacts

12 workshops (King, Pierce, and Jefferson County areas) attended by total of 225 landowners.

21 landowner visits by WSU Extension personnel

90 acres of natural lands enrolled in conservation tool programs by landowners receiving direct program assistance.

108 WSU Extension volunteers received conservation tools education as part of their stewardship training.

14 Jefferson County real estate agents received conservation tools training.

Conservation tools partners have included:

- WSU Extension offices¹
- County governments (Planning, Natural Resource, and Tax Assessor Departments)
- Conservation Districts (Pierce, Jefferson, Snohomish)
- Land Trusts
- Fishery Enhancement Groups and other non-profit organizations
- State agencies (Ecology, Natural Resource, and Fish/Wildlife)
- USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Tribal Organizations
- Puget Sound Action Team

¹Conservation Tools Education Programs have been delivered in King, Pierce, Jefferson, Island, Kitsap, and Snohomish Counties

2004 Milestones To Date

1,300 Snohomish County landowners mailed information on conservation tool programs and contacts

36 landowners attended Snohomish County workshop; follow-up with 10 landowners underway.

17 WSU Extension King County volunteers received conservation tools education.

80+ Island County real estate agents received conservation tools training.

Conservation Tools Education Program

Real Estate Agent Education

Conservation Tools Education has also been integrated into WSU Extension Realtor Education programs. Fourteen Jefferson County agents received training during fall 2003 and over 80 Island County agents received training in spring 2004. The agents learned about both regulatory and volunteer conservation tools, ranging from shore-line buffers required by the Growth Management and Shoreline Management Acts, to tax incentives for lands voluntarily enrolled in open space and conservation easement programs. The goal of this effort is to facilitate the transfer of conservation tools information from real estate agents to the large number of parcel owners and buyers with whom they interact.

WSU - Island County Extension Office,
Island County Public Works and Wash-
ington State Department of Ecology

present one day classes for

Real Estate Professionals and Appraisers
7.5 Clock hours



So What Are Conservation Tools?

The Conservation Tools Education Program focuses on non-regulatory, incentive-based programs. These programs offer a range of opportunities for landowners to manage, conserve, and restore land.

Examples of tools include:

- **Current Use Taxation Programs:** County Public Benefit Rating System and Timber Land programs provide incentives that help landowners voluntarily conserve open space lands and/or manage for timber resources. Landowners can receive property tax reductions for preserving resources such as stream banks, wetlands, or wildlife habitat. Tax deductions are also available for landowners who implement forest stewardship plans.
- **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program:** Conservation Districts provide an opportunity for landowners to rent their streamside land under 10 or 15-year federal contracts. Up to 100 percent cost sharing is also available for tree and shrub planting.
- **Wetland Reserve, Wildlife Habitat and Environmental Quality Incentives Programs:** The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers several conservation tools. Under the Wetland Reserve program landowners can place eligible lands in a permanent or 30-year easement and receive financial compensation. Restoration cost-share agreements that pay up to 75 % of costs are also available. Two Wildlife and Environmental Quality Incentives Programs offer similar technical and financial assistance to landowners.
- **Land Trust Tools:** Land trusts are non-profit groups that can accept land with exceptional habitat value through donations or sales. Land trusts facilitate conservation easements, which can be used by landowners who want to permanently preserve the natural character of their land but maintain ownership, and qualify for local and federal tax deductions.

Land Conservation Options Brochure

The Conservation Tools Education Program is creating a series of 6-page, county-specific brochures that summarize land conservation options and the organizations and people that offer them. The importance of land conservation in the Puget Sound area is highlighted, and testimonials by landowners who have enrolled in conservation programs presented. The brochures are designed to provide a broad overview of available conservation tools, and to inform landowners where they can obtain more detailed information and services.

Brad Gaolach, Ph.D., Interim Chair

WSU King County Extension

919 SW Grady Way, Suite 120, Renton WA 98055-2980

(206) 205-3110 brad.gaolach@metrokc.gov

<http://www.metrokc.gov/wsuce>

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